

time and the opportunity to look at the petition, see if it's broadly drafted, see if it makes sense for all the people in the state, and if it does, fine; if it doesn't, consider the possibility of an alternative amendment which could be presented to the people. And I think that this sort of opportunity has tremendous advantages for the people of the State of Nebraska, because, one, if something is poorly drafted they will have an alternative; and, two, it will encourage the drafters of initiatives to be broad-minded philosophically in terms of what they draw up, because they will know that if it is not broadly drawn to favor all the people of the state, then the Legislature will make an alternative proposal. Now, the amendment also says, and this is very important, the second part of the amendment says that this nine month requirement will not go into effect until January 2, 1999. And that is to fulfill what I again feel is the promise we made to the people that at least at the beginning we would restore things to the way they were as closely as possible. But beginning with all petitions filed after January 1, 1999, they would have to be required to be filed nine months ahead of the election date. Now in terms of the overall time you have to deal with an election, the overall time you have to acquire signatures on your petitions, basically I think under current interpretations it would be reduced from somewhere around 20 months to somewhere around 15 months. All that means is that you have to get started a little earlier and you have to prepare a little more. It shouldn't have any significant impact on the ability to get signatures. So hopefully we have built this in, in such a way, and phased it in, in such a way, that it could not be objected to by any of the current petitioners. It's not going to change anything for any people that are in the petitioning process. We will go through one more election cycle with the four-month requirement. But following that then we will slip over to the nine-month requirement and that again will afford the Legislature the opportunity to present an alternative to an initiative. Now this doesn't apply to referendum, it doesn't apply to initiatives that have to do with statutes, it applies only to initiatives with respect to the constitution. Thank you.

SENATOR HALL: Thank you, Senator Beutler. Senator Dierks, on the Beutler amendment. Senator Dierks doesn't appear to be on the floor. Senator Schimek, your light is next.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Yes, thank you, Senator Hall. I...I'm rising in opposition to this amendment, but I do have a couple of